

Vit C Experimenter To Lead Young SA Team At Fair

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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A young Eastern Cape scientist who found that oranges' Vitamin C levels depend on their storage temperatures will lead a team of four students to an international science fair in the US in May.

Christopher Wilken, 17, won a gold medal for his finding at the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, technology developer Intel said in a statement on Friday.

"I stored oranges from different trees at different temperatures and carried out tests and experiments. The conclusion was that the colder the temperature, the higher the Vitamin C levels in oranges," Wilken told Intel.

He added that his finding would enable farmers to pick oranges at the right time and ensure better crops.

Wilken and other gold medal winners Jason Dixon, 17, Arno de Beer, 17, and Jacques Winterbach, 17, would compete at the 2009 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), in Reno, with 1600 other high school science students from 50 countries for US\$4 million in prize money.

Dixon and De Beer's prize-winning project for the Eskom expo involved the treatment and control of ticks and other parasites found mainly on wild game animals, Intel said.

"Our method of treatment is cost effective and unique," Dixon told Intel.

"We encapsulated chemicals that are normally used for the treatment of ticks and parasites into softgel paintballs."

"We then shot these softgel capsules onto the animals and when the animals were hit, the softgels burst resulting in the chemicals being spread effectively across the targeted areas," he said.

He and De Beer intend entering the same project at the ISEF.

"I am confident that these scientists will continue to apply their talents to tackling the greatest challenges to our planet and our society," said Intel director of corporate affairs Parthy Chetty.

No information was available on Winterbach's project.

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